



The new Star and its top team: Kauffmann (left), Scib and Noyes

## A New Star Is Born

Reporters at the Evening Star were uncharacteristically ebullient last week as they gathered around the dimly lit bar at Mister Henry's, a watering place near the Star's imposing plant in southeast Washington. They were cheered, of course, by the Star's purchase a fortnight ago of its only afternoon rival, the faltering Daily News. But it was not the conquest that excited the reporters; rather, it was what promised to be a quickening of the rivalry between the Star and the morning Washington Post, which in recent years has left the staid Star far behind in the high-powered struggle for journalistic supremacy in the capital.

As recently as the mid-1950s, the Evening Star was the dominant newspaper in Washington—and the fifth-largest U.S. daily in ad lineage. Its conservative editorial voice was eminently suited to the quiet mood of the Eisenhower years. While the Star's aggressive salesmen gobbled up more than half of the burgeoning metropolitan area's lucrative newspaper advertising market, its cast of distinguished newsmen helped nudge the paper's daily circulation past the 250,000 milestone. But after the Post bought out its morning rival, the Times-Herald in 1954, the Star embarked on a long decline. Today, the positions of the two contenders are dramatically reversed.

Whether the Star, with undisputed control of Washington's afternoon market, can now mount a comeback as momentous as the rise of the Post remains to be seen. But clearly the road ahead is

both long and strewn with formidable obstacles. The Post holds an enormous edge in circulation (526,000 to the Star's 303,000 in 1971), and its 71 million lines of advertising last year dwarfed the Star's 35 million. From an \$800,000 loss in 1970, the Star plunged \$3.2 million into the red last year. And Star reporters have long been disturbed by what they view as a combination of nepotism and complacency in the paper's highest echelons. Inevitably, this feeling discouraged many top reporters. Pulitzer-Prize winner Haynes Johnson and political columnist David Broder left—both are now on the Post—and a bevy of bright younger reporters also quit for other challenges. "They were the kind of people you build a future on," one ex-staffer observes sadly.

**Prizes:** Many of these reporters left reluctantly, for the Star's cigar-smoking editor, Newbold Noyes, has always rewarded his best staffers with the closest thing there is to autonomy in the news business. For this reason, the Star staff still includes some extraordinary reporters, from political analyst Robert Walters and investigative reporter Miriam Ottenberg to fiery syndicated columnist Mary McGrory. Over the past decade, the paper has continued to garner its share of publishing's top prizes. Now, clearly, the acquisition of the Daily News has had a salubrious effect on the entire organization. "I wanted," says the Star's urbane president, John H. Kauffmann, "to give our people a new opportunity to show that they can be just as good and just as aggressive as the Post."

To help achieve his ambitious goals for 1973—50 million ad lines and a "minimum gain" of 100,000 in the Star's circulation—Kauffmann counts heavily on the benefits gained from the purchase of the Daily News, which for 50 years was the Washington flagship of the powerful Scripps-Howard chain. In the tradition of Ernie Pyle, who was once its managing editor, the Daily News was the paper of the little man in a city overflowing with influential public figures. Nearly half the readers of the Daily News were black, and a significant number were government workers. To entice these readers, the Star has already advanced its first press run an hour to 9 a.m.—in time for the bureaucracy's cherished coffee break. The Star has also hired ten of the Daily News's top advertising salesmen and a coterie of its circulation personnel. And to strengthen its already solid coverage of local news, the Star has taken on two dozen of the News's best-known staffers, including nippy society columnist Clare Crawford and imaginative food editor Anne Crutcher.

**Rivalry:** Once the Star gets into the black, promises editor Noyes, a major effort will be made to expand its national and foreign coverage, and then to beef up its anemic business and arts sections. A welcome boost will come from David Kraslow, former Washington bureau chief of The Los Angeles Times, who is joining the Star as assistant managing editor under the veteran managing editor Charles Scib. "I am satisfied," says Kraslow, "that this is an outstanding opportunity. The Star is already good. It is on the verge of becoming great."

The Star's plans have galvanized its staff. What still concerns many of its reporters, however, is the competition presented by the Post, which has not only built a formidable lead in advertising and circulation but grows ever more effective in news coverage. The bespectacled Noyes downplays the rivalry. "We aren't trying to run the Post out of town," he says. But from now on, he adds, "this city is going to be served by two strong newspapers." The Post management agreed that the new Star would be tougher competition—and welcomed it. Indeed, as the fastest growing metropolitan area in the U.S.—in population, income and sales—Washington should certainly be able to support two strong papers. Said Post publisher Katharine Graham: "We wish the Star every success."